



**U.S. Immigration
and Customs
Enforcement**

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News Release

Los Angeles receives one of seven new Fugitive Operations teams deployed nationwide

Nation's 45 teams now account for more than 1,000 illegal alien arrests a week

LOS ANGELES — U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) has added a fourth Fugitive Operations team here in Los Angeles to locate and arrest aliens who fail to comply with court orders to leave the United States.

ICE Assistant Secretary Julie L. Myers today announced that Los Angeles and six other cities, including Atlanta, Houston, Newark, Phoenix, Washington, D.C. and Raleigh, NC, have recently received new Fugitive Operations teams, bringing the total number of teams nationwide to 45.

Since October, ICE Fugitive Operations teams in the Los Angeles area have made more than 2,800 arrests, the largest number of any city in the nation. The most recent arrests included a previously deported Jamaican national with prior convictions for firearms and drug violations.

ICE Fugitive Operations teams have federal authorities and nationwide jurisdiction. Though based in specific offices, the teams can be deployed to conduct operations anywhere fugitive alien populations are located in the United States. These teams use intelligence-based information and leads to find, arrest, and place into removal proceedings aliens who have been ordered to leave the country by an immigration judge, but have failed to comply -- making them fugitive aliens.

“The United States is a land of opportunity, but it is also a nation of laws,” said Assistant Secretary Myers. “As such, an immigration judge’s order of removal is not optional and must be followed. The addition of these new fugitive teams increases ICE’s ability to aggressively pursue immigration violators as part of our nationwide interior enforcement strategy.”

The teams prioritize their efforts to arrest fugitive and other illegal aliens according to public safety criteria and other factors. Of the more than 52,000 illegal aliens apprehended by ICE Fugitive Operations teams since the first teams were created in 2003, roughly 22,669 had convictions for crimes including homicide, sexual assault against children, robbery, violent assault, narcotics trafficking, and other aggravated felonies.

By the end of September, a total of 52 Fugitive Operations teams are scheduled to be operational nationwide. The Administration's FY 2007 proposed budget would allow ICE to deploy an additional 18 teams. The 45 Fugitive Operations teams currently in existence are collectively apprehending more than 1,000 illegal aliens a week.

"Taking immigration absconders off of our streets is a top ICE priority," said Eric Saldaña, the deportation officer who oversees the Los Angeles Fugitive Operations teams. "Those immigration fugitives who remain at large should be on notice - the days when you could brazenly ignore an immigration judge's order are over. We are going to find you and send you home."

ICE Fugitive Operations teams are assigned to local offices of ICE Detention and Removal Operations, which often have responsibility for more than one state. Many regional and local offices have more than one team, like Los Angeles, which now has four.

Currently the following ICE offices have Fugitive Operations teams: Baltimore, Boston, Buffalo, Chicago, Dallas, Denver, Detroit, El Paso, Houston, Los Angeles, Miami, Newark, New York City, Philadelphia, Phoenix, Seattle, San Francisco, San Antonio, San Diego, St. Paul, MN and Washington, DC.

The Fugitive Operations teams are a crucial part of ICE's interior immigration enforcement. A critical element of this interior enforcement strategy is to identify and remove criminal aliens, fugitives, and other immigration violators from the United States.

The interior enforcement strategy is part of the Secure Border Initiative (SBI), which is the Department of Homeland Security's comprehensive, multi-year plan to secure America's borders and reduce illegal migration. SBI's border security efforts are focused on gaining operational control of the nation's borders through additional personnel and technology, while re-engineering the detention and removal system to ensure that illegal aliens are removed from the country quickly.

The interior enforcement strategy complements the Department's border security efforts by expanding existing efforts to target immigration violators inside this country, employers of illegal aliens, as well as the many criminal networks that support these activities. The primary objectives are to reverse the tolerance of illegal employment and illegal immigration in the United States.

ICE